



The Cleveland Museum of Art

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SCIENTIFIC LABS EXPLORED BY PHOTOGRAPHER CATHERINE WAGNER

(Cleveland, OH) In the upcoming exhibition, **Investigating Matter**, on view in gallery 105 at the Cleveland Museum of Art, November 1, 1997–January 8, 1998, photographer Catherine Wagner explores the world of scientific research. Visiting such sites as Los Alamos National Laboratory, the Stanford Linear Accelerator, Lawrence Livermore laboratory, and the Washington University laboratory in St. Louis, Wagner photographed the equipment, subjects, and paraphernalia relating to each lab's activity. The show comprises 24 large black-and-white prints, many of them presented in groups—in all, about seven stand-alone images, three diptychs, a triptych, and a nine-print matrix she calls a "typology". Tom E. Hinson, the museum's curator of contemporary art and photography, organized the exhibition. Admission is free.

Says Hinson: "Wagner does not merely document; rather, her images present contrasting forms and textures—glass containers, metal implements, handwritten labels, organic material—in carefully rhythmic compositions. Her work, especially the large *typologies* combining many variations of a single form, is conceptually related to that of the German photographers Hilla and Bernd Becher, from whose work she borrowed the term 'typology' (and whose 12-print typology *Blast Furnaces, Ohio* the museum recently acquired). But instead of the Bechers' matrices of aging industrial structures, she interprets the human-scaled equipment of modern science."

No people appear in Wagner's photographs. The titles come dryly from her subjects: a row of three *-86 Degree Freezers* is labelled "Bipolar Disorder," "HIV," and "Breast Cancer," relating (one assumes) to the contents of the frozen packages within. A photograph of a bottle labelled *Definitely Not Sterile* is titled as such. A carton of tagged and barcoded vegetables is called *Genetically Engineered Tomatoes*. "The title references," says Hinson, "play against the clinical precision of the laboratory and of her elegant prints, alluding to the messy human culture outside the carefully constructed world of these photographs."

Born in 1953 in San Francisco, Wagner is currently a professor of art at Mills College in Oakland, California. An active photographer for some 20 years, she has been the past recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, NEA fellowships, a Mellon Foundation grant, and other awards.

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